CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Fergus Electric
Proposed Implementation Date:	January 2021
Proponent:	Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Location:	11N 18E 36 NW4
County:	Wheatland
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent would like to install an upgraded electric service line at the request of the landowner and the lessee of the trust land. The power line would be buried and would provide power to the adjacent private land.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)
Northeastern Land Office (NELO) & Lewistown Unit Office
Proponent: Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Surface Lessees: Bridge Careless Creek LLC
Other:

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

The DNRC, and NELO have jurisdiction over this proposed project.

The proponent is responsible for acquiring all necessary permits for the proposed project and settling all surface damages with the surface lessees.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does not grant permission to install and maintain a buried electric cable.

Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does grant permission to install and maintain a buried electric cable.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The soils in the easement area are well drained gravelly soils. Because of this the erosion hazard is little and the rutting hazard is only moderate. The soils are rated as somewhat limited for shallow excavations which should not be a major issue depending on the method of installation. Overall, as long as the construction is not done during excessively wet conditions and the disturbance is properly reclaimed there should be no issues.

Shallow Excavations rating

Table — Shallow Excavations — Summary by Rating Value

Summary by Rating Value

Summary by Rating Value		
Rating	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
Somewhat limited	6.0	100.0%
Totals for Area of Interest	**6.0**	**100.0%**

Off road Erosion Hazard

Table — Erosion Hazard (Off-Road, Off-Trail) — Summary by Rating Value

Summary by Rating Value

Summary by Rating Value		
Rating	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
Null or Not Rated	6.0	100.0%
Totals for Area of Interest	**6.0**	**100.0%**

Soil rutting Hazard Rating

Table — Soil Rutting Hazard — Summary by Rating Value

Summary by Rating Value

Summary by Rating Value		
Rating	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
Moderate	6.0	100.0%
Totals for Area of Interest	**6.0**	**100.0%**

No significant cumulative impacts to geology or soil quality, stability, and moisture are anticipated.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

There is limited ground water information for the location. However since the site is 50 vertical feet above the creek in well drained gravel soils there will likely be not contact with groundwater. This project will not change distribution or quality of water and will have no contributions to excess runoff or contaminants.

No significant impacts to local or regional water resources are anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Only temporary affects to air quality will occur during construction. There will be some dust produced and exhaust from equipment. After construction there will be no continuing air quality impacts.

No significant impacts to air quality are anticipated.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

The vegetation in the easement area consists mostly of native short bunchgrasses. Invasive plants have not been noted in the past. Due to the small area of disturbance and lack of existing weeds or invasive plants there is not likely to be negative impacts. However, the proponent will be required to make sure equipment is weed free before construction, properly seed the disturbance, and eradicate any new infestations caused by disturbance.

If re-seeding is necessary the proponent will acquire certified, weed free seed and refer to the Plant Materials Tech Note No. MT-46 (Rev. 4) dated September 2013 for seeding rates.

No rare plants or cover types are present. No significant impacts to vegetation are anticipated.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

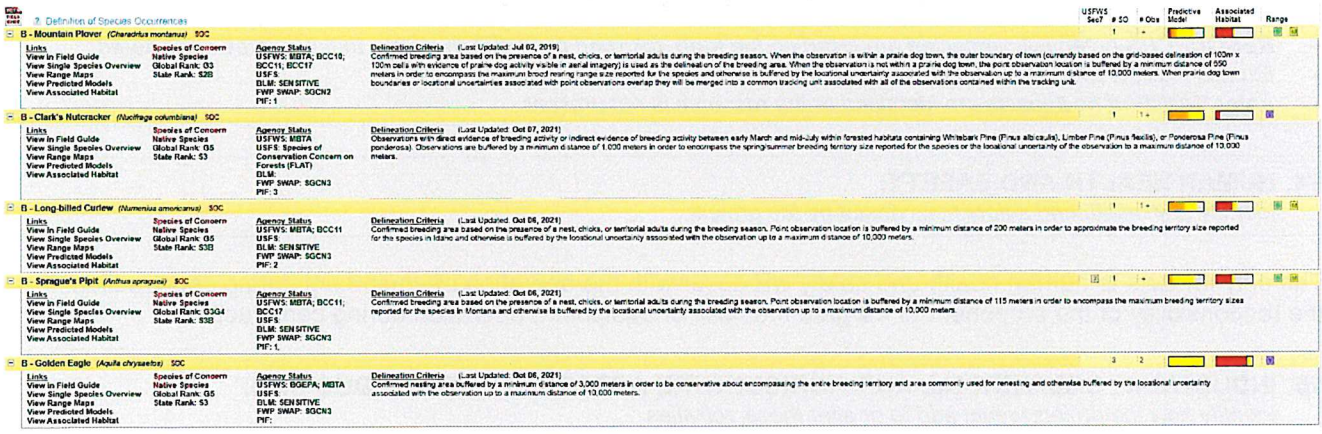
No significant impacts to terrestrial, avian, or aquatic habitats are anticipated.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

The only species of concern noted in the vicinity of this project are birds. Of the 5 species only the Sprague's pipit and Long-Billed curlew would be affected if present because they are upland ground nesting birds. The other species are all more common in wooded areas and nest in trees. The area that the powerline would be installed is on a grassy upland bench and therefore not likely habitat or nesting territory for those species. However, even the pipit and curlew are not likely to be affect because the construction will occur immediately adjacent to an existing road. This already disturbed area is not likely to be a high value area for those species.

Temporary displacement may occur during construction but no immediate or long-term damages should occur.



No significant impacts to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources are anticipated, though temporary displacement of local wildlife may occur during the project.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search revealed that *Antiquities* have not been identified in the APE. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

No significant effects on historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources anticipated.

11. AESTHETICS:
Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

This powerline will be buried right next to an existing gravel road so very minimal aesthetic disturbance will occur. After several years when the excavation settles and the vegetation is growing again there will be very little noticeable disturbance.

No significant impacts on the aesthetics of the area are anticipated.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:
Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No limited environmental resources will be significantly impacted because of this project. This project will also not add any significant cumulative demands on environmental resources.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:
List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tracts listed in this EA Checklist.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:
Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

The only impacts to human health and safety will occur with the operation of equipment during construction. It is the responsibility of the proponent to mitigate the risks of equipment operation during construction.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

This project will not add to or deter from other industrial, agricultural, or commercial activities in the area.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:
Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The project will not create or eliminate any jobs, so no significant effects to the employment market are anticipated.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:
Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes or revenue for the proposed project.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:
Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

There will not be any significant increases in traffic, school attendance, or need for fire and police protection if this project is approved.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:
List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting this project.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:
Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

There will be no significant direct or cumulative effects on access to or quality of recreation and wilderness activities because of this project.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing

The proposed project does not include any changes to housing or developments.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique, or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be significantly impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed project will have no significant impact on any culturally unique quality of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:
Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The proposed project will not have any significant cumulative economic or social effect.

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the Department does grant permission to install and maintain a buried electric cable.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

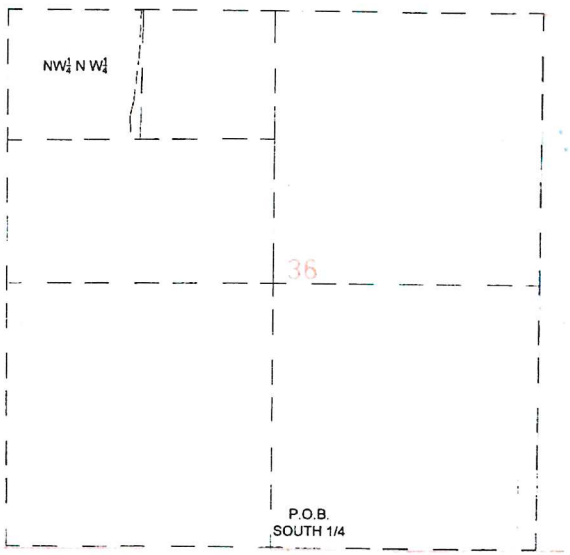
I have evaluated the potential environment effects and have determined no significant impact to the environment because of this project.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

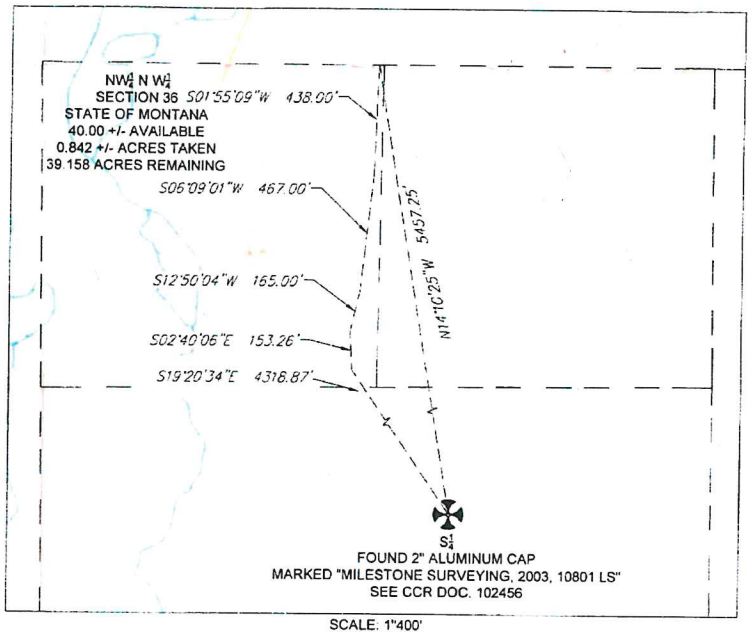
	EIS		More Detailed EA	X	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Dustin Lenz
	Title:	Land Use Specialist
Signature:		**Date:** 22 NOVEMBER 2021

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Jocee Hedrick
	Title:	Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
Signature:		**Date:** 11/22/21



NOTE: THIS PORTION OF THE USGS MAP TAKEN FROM SNOW SAUCER COOLEE QUADRANGLE MONTANA 7.5 MINUTE SERIES
SCALE: 1"=1000'



SCALE: 1"400'

I, CHRISTOPHER W. KOSINE, A REGISTERED LAND SURVEYOR, MONTANA PLS NO. 41478, DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE SURVEY SHOWN HEREON WAS MADE BY ME OR UNDER MY DIRECTION, AND THE INFORMATION SHOWN ON THIS MAP IS TRUE AND CORRECT, TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY. THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED ON MAY 26TH, 2021.

Christopher W. Kosine 07/06/21
CHRISTOPHER W. KOSINE, 41478 PLS

MONTANA
CHRISTOPHER W. KOSINE
41478 LS
LICENSED PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR

BASIS OF BEARING:

US STATE PLANE 1983 MONTANA 2500, NAD 1983, INTERNATIONAL FEET DISTANCES ARE GROUND DISTANCES

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EXHIBIT A

	1/4	SEC	T	R	1/4	Sec	T	R
COUNTY: WHEATLAND	X	36	11N	18E				
PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, MONTANA								

FIELD: CWK
DRAWN: CWK
CHECKED: CWK
DATE: 07-06-21

SHEET
1 OF 1